

Roadside Trees of Southern California

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Whenever one visits a different part of the country, among the interesting things to be seen are the new kinds of trees. Buildings are much the same in all parts of the country, but trees differ north and south, east and west. A visitor from the east to Southern California is probably impressed most by the palms that give a tropical aspect, but most of the other trees seen—acacias, eucalypti, pepper—are not hardy in the north and so, strange. Rarely one greets as friends from home silver maples, box elders, English elms, London planes or cottonwoods.

Of cone-bearing trees the most notable are the Deodars, slender pyramidal, wide-spreading at base, the branches gracefully drooping. They are frequently used as lawn trees and sometimes to border roads. Probably the best known road in California as far as trees go, is the "Mile of Deodars" or, "Christmas Tree Lane" in Altadena. At Christmas time when these trees are covered with colored lights, thousands of cars, their lights turned off, coast down this road nightly. *Cedrus deodar* is a native of the Himalayas. The closely related Atlas and Lebanon Cedars with shorter leaves and stiffer branches are less commonly grown. Pines are not common as street trees, but the Torrey Pine, *Pinus torreyana*, named for our own Dr. John Torrey, the 8 to 10 inch needles in fives, the Canary Island Pine with needles 9 to 12 inches long in threes and the Monterey Pine with needles half as long and in threes, are sometimes seen. The Beefwood or Horsetail tree, *Casuarina equisetifolia*, something like a pine in general appearance, has branchlets with the whorls of tiny appressed leaves looking so much like an equisetum that the specific name seems almost inevitable. It bears little cone-like fruits less than an inch long. It is a native of Australia and belongs with the dicotyledons.

A number of palms are grown in California but only four or five species are commonly planted along the streets. Most common and truly Californian are the two species of *Washingtonia*, *W. filifera*, with thick trunks up to three feet in diameter, with many thread-like filaments hanging from the broad palmate leaves, and *W. robusta*, with more slender trunks—in spite of

its specific name—and few filaments on the leaves. Both of these California Fan Palms are tall, slender trees with crowns of large leaves which, when they die, remain hanging against the trunk forming exaggerated hula skirts that reach to the ground, unless—as is usually done—they are trimmed off to a greater or less distance from the base. Frequently reaching a height of 80 to 100 feet, these graceful palms give character to many streets, but little more shade than a row of telegraph poles. A small fan palm, rarely over 20 feet high, the leaves usually less than three feet in diameter, is the Windmill Palm, *Trachycarpus excelsa*, from China. The mass of black fibers and old leaf bases on the trunk distinguish it from any other palm. True date palms are grown for their fruit in Imperial Valley and may be seen occasionally as ornamental trees on lawns, but the Canary Island Date Palm, *Phoenix canariensis*, is a common tree along the streets. The pinnate leaves, often 20 feet long arch down and the thick trunks are entirely covered with the diamond-shaped leaf scars or the stubs of old leaves. A slender tree with smooth gray trunk ringed about every six or twelve inches with the narrow scars of former leaves, crowned with pinnate leaves 12 to 15 feet long, is the Plume Palm, commonly known by its scientific name, *Cocos plumosa*. (But more recently named *Arecastrum romanzoffianum*.) It is native to Brazil.

From Australia come the various species of Eucalyptus. With all of them—some ninety are grown in California but only four or five are common—the petals and sepals form a cap on the flower bud that falls off to let the large number of stamens expand. The species most commonly grown and one seen frequently, especially along roads outside the cities, is the Blue Gum, *Eucalyptus globulus*. The odd bark shreds off from the trunk, often in strips several yards long, leaving a smooth grey or whitish inner bark exposed. The leaves on mature trees are alternate, narrowly lanceolate, somewhat curved and yellowish green with distinct petioles, but on young trees and shoots they are opposite, broadly ovate, sessile and bluish green or almost white. Another species frequently seen along the streets is the Swamp Mahogany, *Eucalyptus robusta*, a large tree with rough dark brown bark and ovate leaves. In this the brown capsules are small, half an inch long, and shaped like small goblets, quite unlike the larger, bluish, angular capsules of the blue gum, or

the large inch and a half long, urn-shaped capsules, of the following species. The Flowering Eucalyptus, *Eucalyptus ficifolia*, has large, showy clusters of flowers with bright red stamens, or in some cultivated varieties, pink, cream or white. It is commonly a small tree with furrowed grey bark and narrowly ovate leaves.

Another group of trees from Australia are the Wattles or Acacias of which three or four species are commonly planted as street trees and numerous others as specimen trees on lawns. Two of these are without leaves (botanically) as the dense shade they cast is due to the broad, flat petioles, phyllodia. On seedling trees and root shoots the true, twice compound leaves can be found. Sometimes a single shoot shows bipinnate leaves with short round petioles, leaves with longer, flattened petioles, broad petioles with one or two pairs of reduced pinnae at the tip and phyllodia with no leaf blades. The commonest of these Acacias, and one of the most frequently grown of all street trees, is the Blackwood, *Acacia melanoxylon*, which becomes a large tree with a spreading crown. The phyllodia are 3 or 4 inches long, $\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ inches wide. The Water Wattle, *A. retinodes*, is a smaller tree with narrower slightly longer "leaves." While the Blackwood bears its small, round clusters of creamy flowers in early spring, the water wattle has golden flowers almost all the year. The other wattles commonly planted have small, bipinnate leaves, bluish green and rather stiff. Bailey's Acacia, *A. baileyana*, has leaves with two to five pairs of pinnae, each with twenty or more short leaflets crowded together, while the Silver Wattle, *A. decurrens* var. *dealbata*, is a larger tree with eight to twenty pairs of pinnae, each of over thirty leaflets. All of these Acacias are covered in spring with very tiny yellow flowers crowded together in little globular heads born in racemes, often compound. Most of the flowers are staminate, but mingled with them there are a few perfect flowers. As with the Eucalypti it is the stamens of the flowers which are noticed, not the petals.

Another leguminous tree often seen is the Carob or St. John's Bread, *Ceratonia siliqua*, a native of the Mediterranean region. These trees usually show rounded crowns, partly because of pruning, and have once pinnate leaves of three to five pairs of oval leaflets, an inch or more long, with no terminal leaflet.

The inconspicuous red flowers are borne close to the branches, but the chocolate-colored pods 6 to 10 inches long are conspicuous on the pistillate trees. It is these pods with the sweetish pulp around the seeds, that are reputed to be the locusts that John the Baptist ate in the wilderness and they are most certainly the husks that the prodigal son was reduced to.

A characteristic tree with slender drooping branches covered with once compound leaves, the slender pinnae giving an almost fern-like appearance, is the Pepper tree, *Schinus molle*, a native of Peru and a member of the Anacardiaceae. It was brought to California in the early days by the padres. The hanging panicles of red berries on the pistillate trees are noticeable for much of the year. Where pepper trees line both sides of the road, the branches often meet overhead. Small leafy branches growing from the thickened base of the trunks make them irregular and knobby.

Another beautiful tree with twice compound leaves is the Jacaranda, *J. ovaliforme*, a native of Brazil, prized for the feathery foliage as well as for the large clusters of blue or violet flowers,—in size and shape much like those of its close relative, the Catalpa. The trees are well covered with flowers in June and July but a few clusters may be found on some trees at any time through the fall and winter. Less commonly seen is the Silk Oak, *Grevillea robusta* a tall tree with long leaves deeply dissected and so appearing to be twice compound. It is a native of Australia.

Two trees that resemble each other are the Rubber tree, *Ficus elastica*, from the East Indies and the Magnolia, *M. grandiflora*, from the southeastern U. S., for both have thick glossy, evergreen leaves. The first of these is rarely seen in the open, but its close relative, the Moreton Bay Fig, *Ficus macrophylla*, of Australia is frequent as a specimen tree on lawns and at times is grown as a shade tree along streets. Another pair of trees with a superficial resemblance are the Bottle tree, *Sterculia diversifolia*, a native of Australia, and the Camphor-tree, *Cinnamomum camphora*, a native of Formosa. Both have light green, ovate leaves 2 to 3 or 4 inches long, but those of the Bottle Tree are sometimes lobed irregularly, while the leaves of the Camphor-tree are always entire. Then the bark of the Bottle tree is smooth and light grey, that of the Camphor-tree dark

grey, closely and shallowly fissured. The fruit of the former is a group of from 3 to 5 follicles, about 3 inches long which split open to show the double rows of yellowish seeds. These brown fruits, sometimes brightly painted, are an important part of the strings of dried fruits used for decorations and sold to visitors at the curio and gift shops. The leaf twigs and small black berries of the Camphor-tree have a pleasant odor of camphor when crushed.

And, to mention one last tree everyone is sure to notice on the streets, the native live oak, *Quercus agrifolia*, with thick, glossy green, oval leaves, entire or, more often with a few sharp teeth on the margins, is a handsome wide spreading tree. If the visitor to California wishes to recognize the trees a very convenient book is the *Manual of Pacific Coast Trees* by McMinn and Maino, which describes all of the native and the commonly cultivated trees to be found from Oregon to Southern California. Another book the visitor will find helpful in becoming familiar with the trees, and one that can be read with pleasure by tree lovers anywhere at any time, is *Trees and Shrubs in California Gardens* by C. F. Saunders.

In noting the trees commonly planted in California, it may seem as if but scant use is being made of the many splendid native trees of the region, but the same criticism may be made of street planting in other parts of the country where Norway Maples and Spruce, European Elm and Linden, London Plane, Horse Chestnut, Ginkgo and other introduced trees are more apt to be seen than the native ones.

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